



COLOMBIA BUCKET LIST: 12 Things to See & Do

The Local
Experience Curator

KUODA

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A Collection Of Pristine Beaches

Be it a unique family travel vacation or an eco-friendly luxury trip for two, Colombia is packed with a bevy of extraordinary things to see and do. The South American nation is the only one on the continent with both a Caribbean and Pacific coastline, each offering an extensive collection of pristine beaches. But there is much to explore inland (and on surrounding islands) as well.

Renowned for its coffee, legendary for its authors and poets, and explored for its natural beauty, Colombia needs to be on your 2022 travel list. For your inspiration, we've curated a Colombia bucket list for the best things to see and do.

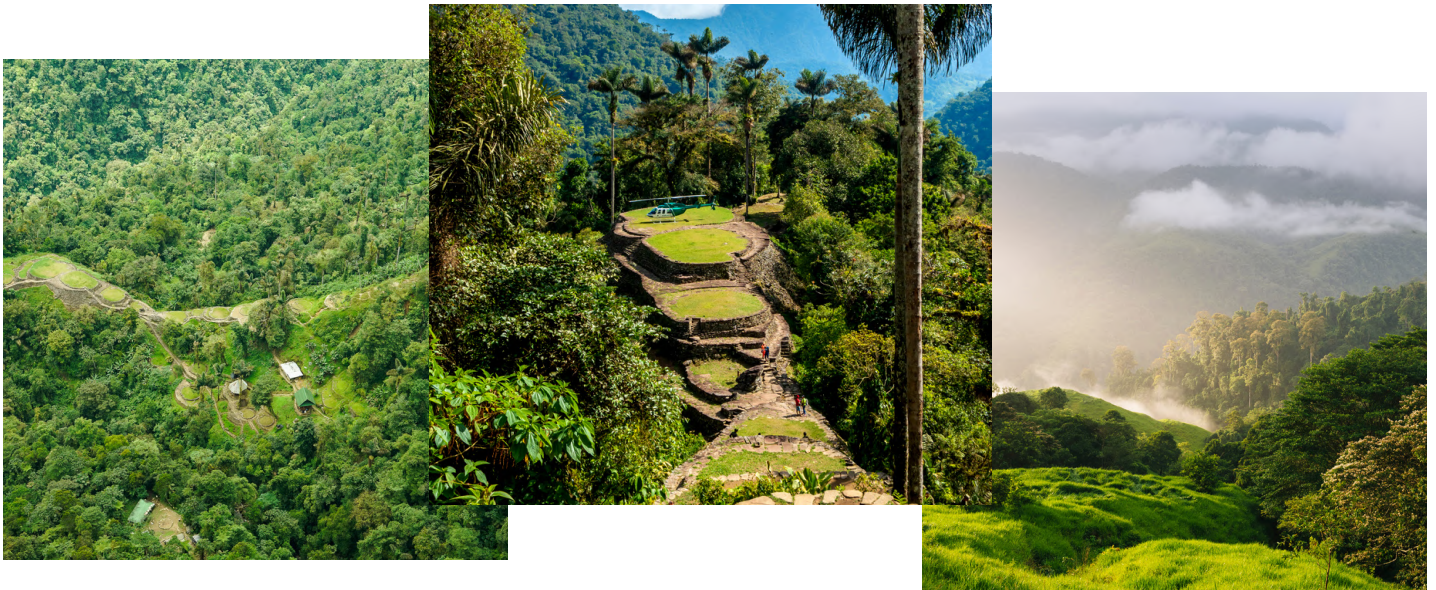


1

Find Colombia's Ancient Lost City

Predating Machu Picchu by several hundred years, Ciudad Perdida (Lost City) is an expansive complex spread across 80 acres of rainforest in northern Colombia's Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Sections of Ciudad Perdida, which belonged to the ancient Tairona people, date back to the 7th century. Plazas, canals, terraces and lots of stone steps will awe visitors, though the site can only be reached by foot on a 30-mile trek which typically takes travelers 4-6 days to complete.

Exclusive and phenomenal, this is just the type of adventurous and authentic travel experience that Kuoda travel experts enjoy including on a custom-made trip. But where did Ciudad Perdida get its name? The massive site, buried under lush jungle pertaining to what UNESCO considered to be a Biosphere Reserve, had been 'lost' for 400 years before being rediscovered in the 1970s.

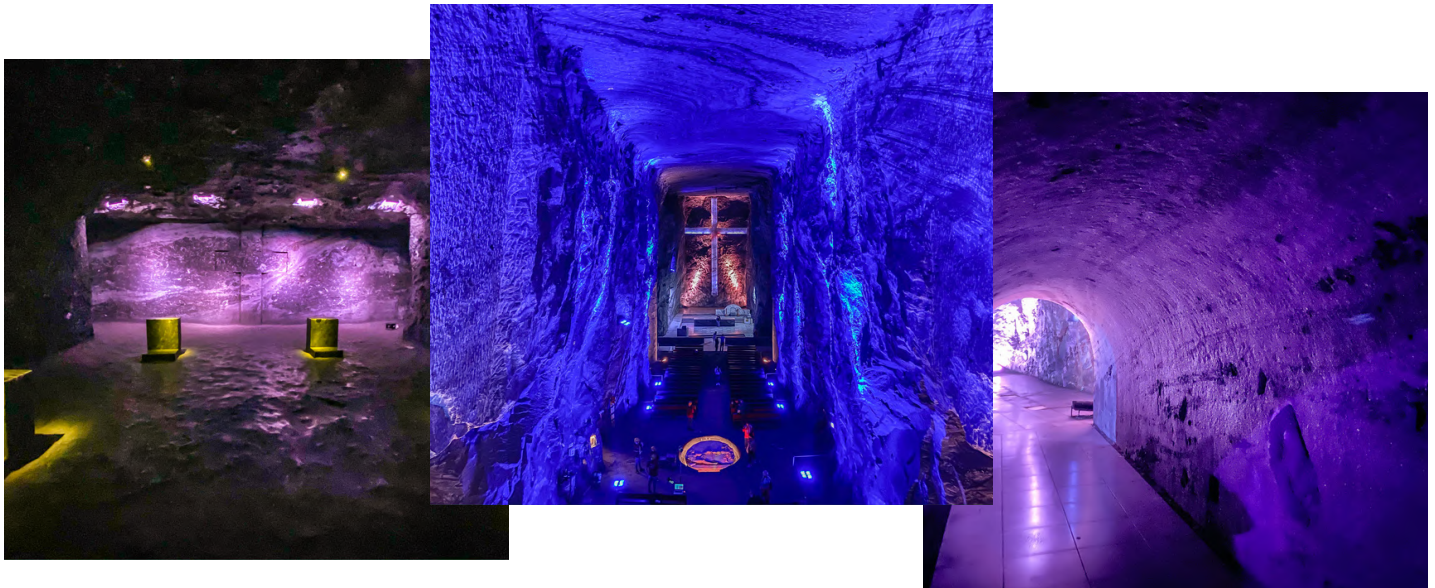


2

Worship the Underground Design of Zipaquira Salt Cathedral

Following a dark tunnel, about 600 feet underground, visitors reach Colombia's most unique church: the Salt Cathedral of Zipaquira. Salt deposits in this area of the Zipaquira pueblo formed some 250 million years ago and would later become a lucrative salt mine— whose abandoned tunnels and caverns gave way to the construction of the church in the 1950s.

Colorful lights not only brighten the mood of the Zipaquira Salt Cathedral but also give visitors a chance to admire and gawk at the incredible architectural detail. A basilica dome, floor-to-ceiling cross, a massive rock salt altar and three naves dedicated to the birth, life and death of Jesus are just some of the fantastic elements to take in while visiting Colombia's salt cathedral on a personalized journey.



3

Stargaze While Glamping in the Tatacoa Desert

Is there anything more grounding than appreciating the unmatched beauty of a starry sky? One of Kuoda's top destinations for stargazing is the tropical dry forest known as Tatacoa. Located just 30 minutes from the city of Neiva, Tatacoa is a multifaceted desert of red rock formations, towering cacti, nature-made labyrinths and otherworldly fossils in the so-called gray section.

Tatacao is renowned as a prime stargazing destination because the area is, generally, absent of artificial light sources. Plus, La Tatacoa Astronomical Observatory offers tours that help you spot constellations and planets—though, the view is spectacular from the comfort of a luxurious camping set-up as well. In the morning, take an early-morning hike to Los Hoyos for a dip in the mineral pool.



4

Uncover Gabriel Garcia Marquez' Inspiration in Cartagena

Over the years, Cartagena de Indias (better known as Cartagena) has become quite touristy— but no amount of visitors can take away from the vibrant charm of this port city. Located on the shores of the Caribbean, Cartagena was founded in the 16th century and is packed with living history. See what inspired Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez as you walk down Cartagena streets filled with brightly painted colonial architecture, trace the 2.5-mile wall surrounding the city, and visit the San Felipe Castle (a UNESCO World Heritage Site).

Of course, beyond these unmissable touristic sites are private travel experiences that include the paradisiacal Rosario Islands—an archipelago considered to be a Colombian National Park that can be reached by private boat— and a healing mud volcano. Located just 30 miles outside of Cartagena, Volcán de Lodo el Totumo possesses mud baths to clear toxins and nurture the skin.



5

Explore Tayrona National Park, by Land or Sea

Located in Colombia's northern Caribbean region, Tayrona National Park is renowned for its white-sand beaches facing an intensely blue sea and superb snorkeling opportunities. It's the park's proximity to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range however that results in Tayrona's great ecological diversity. Hundreds of species of birds, fish, and coral make this protected area a playground for the responsible traveler.

Kuoda travel designers can plan a custom journey to this Colombian national park that includes spotting as many as possible of the 300 species of birds living in the area upon a jungle hike, horseback riding down the powdery beach or taking a dip in the pleasant Caribbean water for an up-close look at the area's 110 species of coral and 401 species of colorful fish. Tayrona has an extremely diverse climate as its proximity to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta brings chilly mountain breezes to cool visitors off from the otherwise tropical weather.



6

Disconnect in the Idyllic Providencia Island

A minuscule island where so much of local life takes place on the beach, Providencia was made for slow travel. Providencia is politically part of Colombia yet fully embraces its proximity to Costa Rica and Jamaica. In other words, this 6.6-square-mile island is packed with amazing beaches and a laid back vibe. Another plus? It is far lesser known than the nearby Caribbean island, San Andres, meaning more opportunities for you as a traveler to disconnect on a private journey.

After taking a quick flight or 3-hour boat ride from San Andres, travelers will be pleasantly surprised to witness the absence of massive hotels and crowds. Spend your days lounging on pristine beaches, scuba diving to explore one of the largest coral reefs in the world, or hiking up the highest peak on the island, El Pico. Just know that a fresh coconut cocktail is never far away.



7

Venture to the Coastal Deserts of La Guajira

After venturing to the jungles and Caribbean islands of Colombia, it's time to discover the imposing and wild drylands of Colombia. La Guajira region is located on the northern Caribbean coast of Colombia. Just beyond the pristine beaches and quaint fishing villages is an expansive desert characterized by towering sand dunes and salt flats.

Row a boat across one of the four lagoons in the Camarones village to witness a flock of flamingos; be awe-struck by Cerrejon's salt mines that sparkle blue, white and pink; catch a gust of wind in Cabo de la Vela for a kitesurfing session, and so much more.

In addition to stunning natural landscapes, La Guajira boasts the largest indigenous population in all of Colombia. Having never been conquered by the Spanish, the culture of the Wayuu people is incredibly unique and lively. An immersive visit to their communities is ideal for those looking to integrate authentic and ethical tourism into their Colombia journey.



8

Enjoy the View in the Most Beautiful Town in Colombia

Barichara is one of those sleepy, old school towns that, while it may lack an active nightlife, has a surplus of charm. Often referred to as “el pueblo más lindo” in Colombia, Barichara is postcard-perfect with its cobblestone streets, traditional colonial architecture and boutique hotels. The pretty town is located in the Santander region, about 5 hours (driving) from Bogota.

Backdropped by mountains, visitors on a tailor-made journey will delight in the quotidian life that can be witnessed from the steps of the Catedral de la Inmaculada Concepción (the town’s largest church) or the viewpoint, El Mirador.

Spend half a day walking down memory lane along the scenic old road connecting Barichara to Guane, a small neighboring town. Be sure to refuel with one of the region’s most typical foods, arepas santandereanas, with a serving of cabrito (goat).



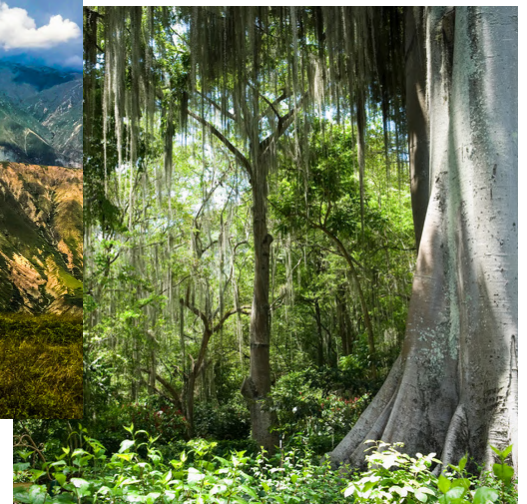
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Head to San Gil, Colombia's Adventure Sports Capital

Though San Gil is quite popular with backpackers, the small Andean town has a vibrant energy that lures even the most meticulous of luxury travelers as well. Surrounded by verdant mountains and rivers, the pretty area is near Chicamocha National Park where visitors can go to witness the surreal beauty of the Chicamocha Canyon.

As the adventure sports capital of Colombia, family travel tours or private journeys can include experiences such as rappelling down the rock walls of the breathtaking, 180-meter high waterfall, Juan Curi (or simply soak in the cascade's natural pool) or a scenic mountain bike tour set at your level. For extreme thrillseekers, consider bungee jumping or white water rafting.

For a relaxing outing, head to Parque Gallineral, a 4-hectare reserve located just 10 minutes from the main plaza of San Gil. Stroll along the park's thousands of moss-covered trees and along the rolling river while spotting friendly squirrels and colorful parrots.



10

Take a Plunge in Quebrada Las Gachas

An off-the-beaten-path gem, the natural plunge pools found in the small town of Guadalupe have somehow shied away from major tourism making it a destination for travelers seeking the authentic and pristine. Located in Santander (yes, we've mentioned the region a few times, so you know it is a Kuoda favorite for custom made journeys to Colombia), Guadalupe is free of the typical souvenir shops and local tour guides haggling for customers. Instead, visitors are welcomed by friendly locals and incredibly fresh air thanks to the nearby mountains and bevy of palm trees.

The Quebrada Las Gachas natural pools are the main attraction of Guadalupe and once you arrive at these large river holes you'll understand why. Colored year round by red and purple algae, the plunge pools are just an hour's walk from the main plaza of Guadalupe. Fed by a running river, the natural pools are of varying depths and widths and make for a refreshing dip on a hot day (just avoid visiting on weekends as domestic tourism to the Quebrada Las Gachas spikes on weekends).



11

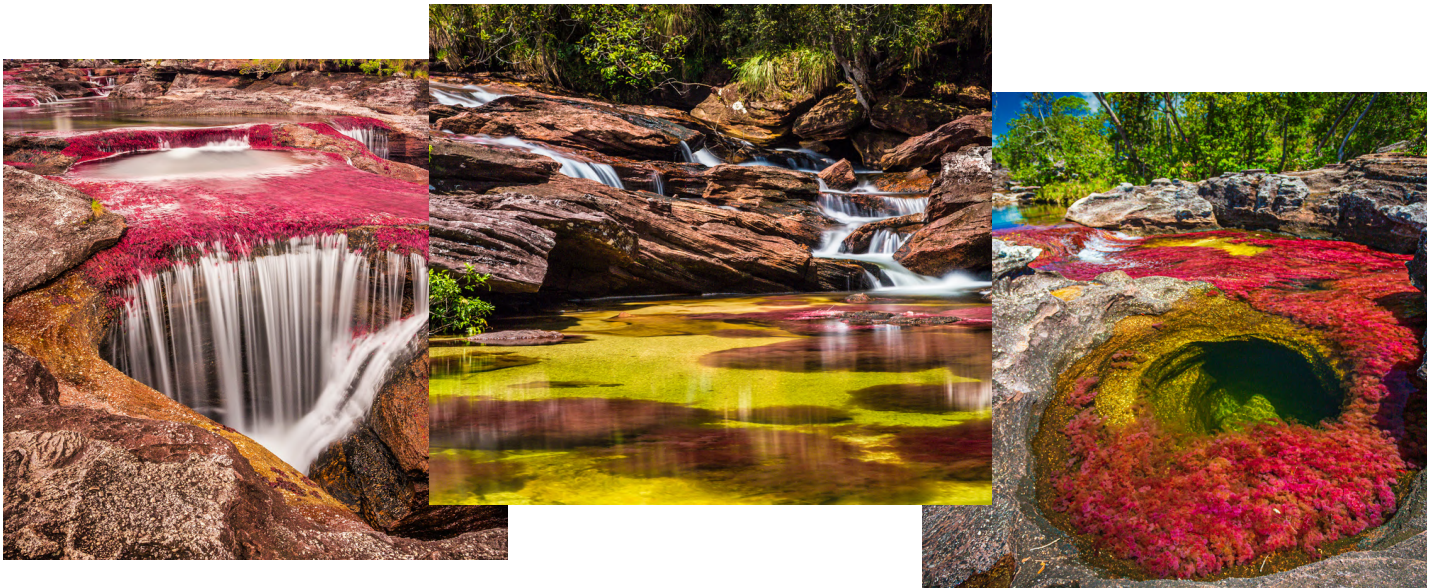
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Fall in Love with Colombia's Liquid Rainbow, Caño Cristales

Colombia's landscape is etched with mystical rivers, many of which are naturally painted vibrant colors that don't typically come to mind when travelers think of fresh water.

Perhaps the most well known and impressive is the liquid rainbow known as Caño Cristales, located in the Serranía de la Macarena National Park. Also referred to as the "River of Five Colors," the 62-mile stretch of water is home to red, yellow, blue, green and black varieties of *Macarenia clavigera*, a species of riverweed. The plants (and thus the river) are at their most vibrant between the months of July and November.

Ten new eco-tourism trails surround the river's lush shoreline, a hotspot for biodiversity. The park is ripe with turtles, iguanas and some 400 species of birds and yet, curiously enough, the river is so clear and free of nutrients that no fish can be witnessed in Caño Cristales. For responsible travelers on an eco-luxury adventure in Colombia, this is a must visit destination!



12

15

Scale the Iconic Stone Of El Peñol

One of the best day trips from Medellin, the stone of El Peñol is an approximately 65 million-year-old landmark of Colombia. Standing around 700 feet high from its base, visitors need to climb 700-plus zig-zagging stairs to get to the top of this inselberg. From El Peñol's peak, visitors are rewarded with an impressive view of tiny man-made islands and traditional houses that dot this sector of the Antioquia department.

How magical is this monolith? The nearby town of Guatapé has tried to claim it as theirs for years with no luck. All rivalries aside, the colorful town of Guatapé is well worth a visit before or after your climb up El Peñol. Safe and friendly, the streets of Guatapé are incredibly colorful and will have you snapping photos all day long. For an afternoon snack, head to the part of town locals refer to as cuatro esquinas, where families set up tasty street food stands.

